

**COUNTY OF SAN DIEGO, CALIFORNIA**  
**BOARD OF SUPERVISORS POLICY**

**Subject**

SIGNAGE IN COUNTY ROAD RIGHTS OF WAY

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Purpose

To establish regulations as to the design, construction, and erection of signs in County rights of way.

Background

The State of California Streets and Highways Code, Chapter 5.5, Division 2, provides the authority for the County Road Commissioner to control signs within the County's rights of way. This authority was granted to assist in roadside cleanup and litter removal programs. The County's Strategic Plan includes a Safe and Livable Communities Initiative. County control of signs in County road rights of way helps keep communities safe and livable by enhancing roadway safety and helping communities in the County retain their character.

Policy

It is the policy of the Board of Supervisors that:

A. Permanent Signs:

1. Eligibility/Purpose:

a. Signs are permitted in the County rights of way for the purpose of promoting traffic or public safety. Eligibility for directional signs shall be determined by the Director of Public Works in conformity with those regulations found in Section 4-04.13 of the Caltrans Traffic Manual addressing safety. A denial of eligibility may be appealed to the Planning Commission pursuant to Sections 7200-7206 of The Zoning Ordinance.

b. Public organizations and private organizations, such as bench advertising agencies, are eligible to place transit benches with and without advertising within the County rights of way. However, this policy shall not supersede adopted overlay zones or ordinances (Section 6203(a) of The Zoning Ordinance) which may restrict placement of benches with or without advertising within the County rights of way.

2. Encroachment Permit:

A revocable encroachment permit shall be obtained from the Department of Public Works prior to placement of all signs, benches, shelters, or chairs within the County rights of way.

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The County may revoke a permit by giving 30 days notice to remove, in writing, to the permittee. The encroachment permit shall provide that if the sign has not been removed within this period, it may be removed and destroyed by the County at the permittee's expense.

3. Location:

a. Destination and Public Safety Signs:

(1) The location of all signs shall be approved by the Director of Public Works or the Director's representative to ensure traffic safety.

(2) Signs shall not be permitted within 100 feet of traffic signals or within 100 feet of official directional or regulatory signs (stop, speed, parking, etc.) on any street where such signs are located, or closer than 50 feet to transit loading zone signs.

(3) A sign may be placed at every decision point on the route to the destination. A minimum spacing of 60 meters between directional signs should be maintained. If there are more eligible destinations at a given intersection than can be accommodated under the above limitations and 3(a)(5) below, they must compete for signs based on traffic volumes to these destinations. Normally, destination signage is via the route requiring the least amount of time to travel from the nearest state highway. Neighborhood Watch signs are exempt from this subsection.

(4) Signs shall be installed in compliance with all sections of the Vehicle Code and safety laws.

(5) At locations where three or more directional signs are located within 200 feet, all shall be grouped on single posts and panels not to exceed a total of four destinations.

b. Transit Bench and Transit Shelter Advertising Signs:

The placement of transit benches and transit shelters with advertising signs shall be in compliance with Board of Supervisors Policy J-31 and Section 6203(1) of The Zoning Ordinance.

4. Construction Designs and Material of Signs:

a. Destination and Public Safety Signs:

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(1) All signs shall be of permanent, durable materials, such as porcelain and enamel steel or other acceptable construction and of standard size in accordance with Caltrans standards, except community identification signs at the entrances to cities and towns.

(2) All signs shall be of standard material, design, shape, size and color (as approved by the Director of Public Works or a representative).

(3) A 3/8" black border 1/4" from the edge of the sign shall be provided.

(4) Not more than three lines of copy will generally be permitted with a minimum height of 2-1/4" plain capital block lettering, and all signs shall include an arrow at the bottom of the sign to indicate directions.

(5) No seals, emblems, or insignia, nor any other color paint will be permitted on signs.

(6) Posts for signs shall be 4" x 4", S4S, clear redwood, 11 feet long.

(7) Posts shall be painted with one prime coat and two coats of white lacquer enamel. The bottom 48" of the post shall have in addition one coat of black asphalt paint.

(8) The bottom of the posts shall be 2'6" below the ground or sidewalk level.

(9) The sign and post shall be so placed as to minimize the hazard to both pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

(10) The sign shall be attached to the post with two 5/16" galvanized carriage bolts.

**b. Transit Bench and Transit Shelter Advertising Signs:**

Construction, design and materials for transit benches and transit shelters with advertising signs shall be in compliance with Board of Supervisors Policy J-31 and Section 6203(1) of The Zoning Ordinance.

**5. Illegal Signs:**

Signs placed in the County rights of way contrary to the above provisions are illegal and will be removed by the County and destroyed. However, any signs existing prior to the adoption of this policy will be posted with a removal notice fastened securely to the sign

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or billboard to notify the owner the date that this sign will be removed by the County if not removed by owner.

**6. Full Cost Recovery**

Private parties requesting a sign shall pay all costs of processing, construction and installation by the Department of Public Works.

**B. Temporary Election Campaign Signs:**

1. For purposes of this Policy, Election Campaign Signs shall be defined as signs for elections conducted by the Registrar of Voters.

2. Temporary public election campaign posters may be permitted, subject to the following procedures:

a. The Registrar of Voters shall maintain copies of the Board policy relative to election posters and shall issue a copy to each candidate at the time the candidate's petition is issued.

b. In order to prevent a danger to motorists and pedestrians due to confusion and distraction, which may be caused due to the posting of signs in certain locations where they compete with traffic safety signs or interfere with visibility, it shall be necessary to obtain a revocable Encroachment Permit from the Director of Public Works.

(1) The maximum size of a poster shall be four square feet.

(2) The poster shall (on the back) identify the Encroachment Permit number.

(3) No sign shall be placed in the right of way earlier than 90 days prior to an election.

(4) The permit shall require the signer to obtain permission to place any signs on or attached to the property of others, and shall provide that the permit shall be revoked if the permittee uses the property of others without their permission. Nothing in the permit shall be taken to imply County permission to place signs on property of others.

(5) The permit shall require the permittee to remove his/her signs within two weeks after the election for which the permit was issued, and shall authorize the County to remove, without notification, signs not so removed by signer.

(6) In each instance and under the same conditions as the Policy permits temporary campaign signs, a sign containing a non-commercial message and constructed to the same physical dimensions and characteristics shall be permitted.

(7) The County shall charge for sign removal and the permittee shall, in signing his/her permit, agree to pay for County cost of removal of his/her signs.

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Sunset Date

This policy will be reviewed for continuance by 12-31-09.

Board Action

10-18-65 (9)

County Engineer Letter 1-14-66

01-25-66 (86)

06-23-69 (98)

07-24-79 (41)

10-6-82 (56)

12-4-84 (14)

07-26-88 (43)

12-12-89 (49)

05-18-94 (3)

07-14-99 (4)

05-15-02 (3)

09-18-02 (5)

06-18-03 (9)

06-23-04 (12)

CAO Reference

1. Department of Public Works

2. Department of Planning and Land Use